



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

AUG 16 2007

The Honorable Brian Schweitzer
Governor of Montana
State Capitol
Post Office Box 200801
Helena, Montana 59620-0801

Dear Governor Schweitzer:

Thank you for your letter of July 7, 2007, enclosing an article that discusses the possibility of two-area classification (also known as split-State status) for the State of Montana with regard to bovine brucellosis.

Like you, we at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) are very concerned about the potential for Montana to lose its brucellosis class-free status as a result of brucellosis-affected wildlife or other sources transmitting the disease to cattle herds in the southwest portion of the State. I am pleased that Dr. John Clifford, Deputy Administrator for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS) program; Dr. Jerry Diemer, VS Western Region Associate Director; and APHIS public affairs specialist, Ms. Teresa Howes, met with you in June 2007 to discuss brucellosis-related issues. I hope that you have now received Dr. Clifford's letter of July 11, 2007, providing further information on preparations necessary for a two-area classification. For your reference, I am enclosing a copy of that letter.

We must emphasize that USDA does not move forward with designating a two-area classification until a disease incursion into livestock has taken place in a State. (In the case of brucellosis, two or more cases in livestock would constitute an incursion.) However, we encourage the State of Montana to begin gathering the information that would need to be provided to APHIS as part of a formal request for two-area classification if another case of brucellosis were detected in the State. Dr. Clifford, Dr. Diemer, and Ms. Howes would

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welcome the opportunity for another meeting with you to discuss these issues further. To arrange a meeting, your staff can contact VS' Assistant Director for Ruminant Health programs, Dr. Francisco Collazo-Mattei. His telephone number is (301) 734-6954.

I appreciate your commitment to eradicating brucellosis and the ongoing cooperation between USDA and the State of Montana to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Johanns". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mike Johanns
Secretary

Enclosure